

GAME TABLE ASSEMBLY AND METHOD UTILIZING INTERLOCKING STACKABLE FRAME MEMBERS

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

The present invention generally relates to structures and apparatus for use in playing games. More particularly, the present invention is directed to a game table that utilizes interlocking stackable frame members for the assembly thereof. The present invention also concerns game table assemblies that can be used for multiple different table games that are easily converted from one to another. This invention also concerns the methods embodied in such assemblies.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Throughout recorded history, the gregarious and social nature of humans have been evidenced in many and varied leisure activities. Among such activities has been the development of a variety of games. Many of these games pit the player's abilities against each other as a test of physical prowess, physical dexterity, intelligence and/or luck.

For example, physical prowess skills, such as running, jumping, throwing, wrestling and the like, were organized at the Olympic games where individual participants vied against each other for prizes and recognition. The Olympic tradition has continued until the present time. Likewise, various teams have been organized such that these teams compete with each other in contests or "meets" for an overall team score based on the performance of the members of the team. These meets include such activities as track and field, swimming, gymnastics, etc. Also, modern times have seen the advent of team sports, such as basketball, football, soccer, lacrosse and a host of others, wherein victory is also determined by the interactive physical abilities of the team members.

In addition to these physical games, other games have been developed which test more the physical dexterity of the participants. Examples of these games may be exemplified by games such tennis, table tennis, billiards, to name a few. In more modern times games of dexterity such pinball, darts and a host of electronic and video games test player's physical dexterity either one against the other or against computer controlled adversaries.

Still further, other games test the player's mental abilities. These games, such as chess and checkers, rely solely upon the participants' mental skills of

strategy. Still other games integrate both mental ability and chance. These include, for example, a plethora of card games and dice games to name a few.

Regardless of the skill tested, games continue to provide an excellent form for stimulating social interaction and entertainment. As noted above, one popular category of games include table games, such as billiards, hockey, foosball and the like. Typically table games configured as conventional tables, having four legs with the table top serving as a playing surface. Many of these games, such as table hockey, foosball and others are sold in an unassembled state and require complex assembly by the purchaser. Many of these games utilize control rods that are to be manipulated by players to control the movement of strikers which are often configured as small models of human players. During the assembly of such games, the intricate parts of these control rods cannot be inserted into the table assembly and cannot therefore be pre-assembled for convenience of the purchaser. Moreover, these game assemblies are constructed such that only one game may be played per table. Since many homes have limited space for such table games, it is difficult for families to have a variety of self-standing table games for varied entertainment activities. While some game tables are provided to allow multiple games to be played, such assemblies may be more expensive than many consumers can afford.

Thus, there is a need for gaming tables that are simple in construction and are easy to assemble. There is also a need for simplified gaming table assemblies that can be reconfigured and converted into different games. The present invention is directed to meeting such needs.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

It is an object of the present invention to provide a new and useful game table that is simple in construction and easy to assemble.

Another object of the present invention is to provide a gaming table assembly wherein certain components thereof can be pre-assembled to reduce the difficulties of assembly to the ultimate user.

Yet another object of the present invention is to provide a game table assembly that can be converted to allow the play of multiple different games.

Still a further object of the present invention is to provide game table assembly methods embodied in the structures described herein.

According to the present invention, then, a game table is provided that is adapted to be placed on the support surface. In one form of the invention, the game

table includes a plurality of elongated legs which each have a longitudinal axis. Each leg includes a first end adapted to engage a support surface and a second end opposite the first end. A plurality of side panels (which may be either side panels or end panels) are each adapted to extend between a pair of adjacent legs when in an assembled state. Each side panel has a top edge, a bottom edge and opposite end edges. Moreover, each side panel includes an end profile on each of its end edges with the end profiles being operative to slideably engage respective one of the legs for slidable movement there along. This allows each side panel to be positioned at a selected location along the respective pair of legs so that the side panels, when in the assembled state, define a play area. Positioning elements are then associated with each leg, and the positioning elements are operative to position at least some of the side panels at selected locations along the respective legs. At least one floor panel is adapted to extend across the play area and to be supported by at least some of the side panels. The floor panel is operative to define a game floor.

In one embodiment, each of the legs is arcuate in cross section so as to have opposite longitudinally extending leg edge portions oriented at an angle with respect to one another. Each end portion has a longitudinally extending slideway form therein. Each end profile then includes a rib sized and adapted for mated engagement with the slideway. In the exemplary embodiment, the leg edge portions are oriented at an angle of about 90° with respect to one another. Here, also, each positioning element is defined by a rod of selected length and sized for mated engagement with the slideway. Each leg can also include a foot member disposed at the first end thereof. The foot member may include a level adjuster associated therewith. An end cap may disposed at the second end of each leg.

In another embodiment, each of the legs is formed by a pair of elongated tubular sections joined by a web. Each end profile then includes a slide bracket having a C-shaped portion sized and adapted to mateably engage a respective tubular section. The positioning elements in this embodiment are defined by positioning brackets that are securable to the legs at selected locations therealong.

Here, also, a plurality of play rod assemblies may be provided. At least some of the side panels are formed by a pair of cooperative panel sections which have confronting edges with cut outs that register with one another to define openings adapted to receive and support respective ones of the play rod assemblies. At least some of the side panels may have goal openings formed therein, and a ball collector

may be associated with each goal opening. The play rod assemblies may be selected from a group consisting of table hockey rod assemblies and table soccer rod assemblies.

According to another aspect of the present invention, a game table is provided and includes a plurality of side panels again each having a top edge, a bottom edge and opposite end edges. Here, at least some of the side panels are formed by pairs of cooperative panel sections which have confronting edges with cut-outs that register with one another to define openings. A floor panel again extends across the play area to define a game floor. A plurality of play rod assemblies are adapted to be received and supported by respective ones of the openings on the confronting edges of the cooperative panel sections. These side panels are adapted to be assembled in an assembled state to surround a play area. With further detail, the side panels of the game table may include a first set of opposed side panels and a second set of opposed side panels with the first and second sets being adapted for configuring two different games. At least two floor panels may then be provided for configuring the different games. A game assembly may also be included with this game assembly being adapted to be supported by the side panels so that the game assembly is in the play area. The game assembly may be selected from a group consisting of table tennis, billiards, basketball, roulette, baseball, football, softball, darts, bowling, chess, checkers, table tennis, craps, poker, Black Jack and other card games, bingo, hockey, soccer, dice games, video games.

To further stabilize the game table, a plurality of brace members may be provided with each brace member being adapted to extend between a pair of adjacent legs. The brace members may include brace end profiles on opposite end portions with the end profiles being operative to slidably engage a respective leg. Such profiles may either be a bar or a C-shaped bracket, for example, depending upon the leg construction. The brace members may support an optional shelf.

The present invention is also directed to a method of configuring a game table. Broadly, the method includes the step of interconnecting a plurality of side panels in an assembled state to surround the play area wherein each side panel has a top edge, a bottom edge and opposite end edges. Here, at least some of the side panels are formed by pairs of cooperative panel sections having confronting edges with cut outs that register with one another to define openings. The method then includes the step of supporting a floor panel across the play area to define a game

floor and positioning a plurality of pre-assembled play rod assemblies in respective ones of the openings.

The method according to the invention may also include a first set of opposed side panels and a second set of opposed side panels. Here, the first and second sets of side panels are adapted to configure two different games. The step of interconnecting a plurality side panels then includes the step of selecting one of the first and second sets of opposed side panels to be assembled and a step of storing the other one of said first and second sets of opposed side panels. In the method, the preassembled play rod assemblies may be selected from a group consisting of table hockey rod assemblies and table soccer rod assemblies.

These and other objects of the present invention will become more readily appreciated and understood from a consideration of the following detailed description of the exemplary embodiments of the present invention when taken together with the accompanying drawings, in which:

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Figure 1 is a perspective view of a game table according to the first exemplary embodiment of the present invention configured as a foosball table;

Figure 2 is an exploded side view in elevation, partially broken away, of the game table shown in Figure 1;

Figure 3 is a perspective view of an end portion of a first exemplary embodiment of a leg extrusion used in the game table of Figures 1 and 2;

Figure 4 is a perspective view of a positioning element used with the game table of Figures 1 and 2;

Figure 5 is an exploded perspective view of a brace member used with the game table of Figures 1 and 2;

Figure 6 is an exploded perspective view of a representative construction panel and end profiled used in the game table of Figures 1 and 2 and with the leg extrusion of Figure 5;

Figure 7 is a top view in cross section of a pair of construction panels and brackets therefore secured to the leg extrusion of Figure 5;

Figure 8 is a bottom perspective view on an end cap used with the leg extrusion of Figure 5;

Figure 9 is an exploded perspective view of a foot assemble used for the legs of the game tables of Figures 1 and 2;

Figure 10 is a side view in elevation of a one type of side panel used with the game table of Figures 1 and 2;

Figure 11 is an end view in elevation showing the side panel of Figure 10 receiving a cross bar support;

Figure 12 is a side view in elevation of one type of end panel used with the game table of Figures 1 and 2;

Figure 13 is a side view in elevation of another type of end panel used with the game table of Figures 1 and 2 with this end panel being formed by a pair of cooperative panel sections;

Figure 14 is a side view in elevation of another type of side panel used with the game table of Figures 1 and 2 with this side panel being formed by a pair of cooperative panel sections;

Figure 15 is a cross sectional view taken about lines 15-15 of Figure 14;

Figure 16 is a side view in elevation of an exemplary pre-assembled rod assemble for use with the game table of Figures 1 and 2;

Figure 17 is a perspective view of a ball collector which may be used with the game table of Figures 1 and 2;

Figure 18 is a side view in elevation of the ball collector of Figure 17;

Figure 19 is a perspective view, partially broken away showing the game table of Figure 1 reconfigured so as to form a table hockey game;

Figure 20 is a diagrammatic view showing the game table of Figure 1 used alternatively to support other table top games here in the form of table tennis and billiards;

Figure 21 is a perspective view of a second exemplary embodiment of a leg extrusion used in the game table of Figures 1 and 2;

Figure 22 is a perspective view of a positioning bracket used in the construction of the game table of Figures 1 and 2 with the leg extrusion of Figure 21;

Figure 23 is an exploded perspective view of a representative construction panel and bracket used in the game table of Figures 1 and 2 and with the leg extrusion of Figure 21;

Figure 24 is a top view in cross section of a pair of construction panels and brackets therefore secured to a leg extrusion;

Figure 25 shows a third exemplary embodiment of a game table according to the present invention; and

Figure 26 is a perspective view illustrating the use of selected components of the present invention to construct a shelf system.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE EXEMPLARY EMBODIMENTS

The present invention broadly concerns game tables and methods of construction therefore. More specifically, the present invention concerns a game table that allows pre-assembly of certain parts so as to simplify the complete assembly thereof. In addition, the invention concerns a game table that may be converted among several games in an easy and convenient manner whereby a consumer may have multiple games in a confined space. In so doing, the present invention utilizes a simplified construction for multiple game tables.

With reference to Figure 1, a first exemplary embodiment of game table 10 may be seen to be configured for the game of foosball. Game table 10 includes four upstanding legs 12 that mount a plurality of construction panels which for purposes of the claims may all be referred to as "side panels". For sake of this description, however, these construction panels may be referred to as "end panels" and "side panels". In Figure 1, then, game table 10 includes first end panels 14, first side panels 16 that each extend between pairs of adjacent legs 12 to surround and define a play area 17. A first floor panel 15 extends across play area 17 and is bounded by the side and end panels. Game table 10 also includes braces, such as end braces 19 and side braces 20 to help stabilize the game table. If desired, optional shelf 21 may be provided, and shelf 21 is here shown to be supported on braces 19 and 20 by hooked brackets 22. The upper ends of each leg 12 is provided with an end cap 23 and an optional level adjusting foot member 37 may be mounted in the first ends of legs 12 opposite end cap 23.

While the construction of game table 10 may be seen with particularity with reference to Figure 2, in order to understand the assembly of game table 10, it is helpful to first understand some of the construction features of the components used. First, with reference to Figure 3, a representative leg 12 is depicted and is formed as an elongated aluminum extrusion having a longitudinal axis "L". Here, it may be seen that leg 12 includes a pair of arcuate webs 64 and 65 that have C-shaped slideways 66 and 67 at opposite leg edge portions 68 and 69 that are oriented at an angle with respect to one another. Here, leg edge portions 68 and 69 are at

generally a right angle. It should be understood that leg members 12 can take other configurations as would be known in the art.

With reference to Figure 4, each positioning element 25 is a solid rod of selected length and of a suitable material, such as plastic, that is sized for mated engagement with the slideways 66 and 67. If desired, this rod may be provided with break-apart sections to allow shortening their length. Further, and with reference now to Figure 5, it may be seen that braces 19 and 20 are formed as elongated hollow tubular pieces 90 that has a pair of end plugs 91 at each opposite end. End plugs 91 support a cylindrical bar 92 that is sized and adapted for mated engagement with slideways 66 and 67. As contemplated, end plugs 91 may be constructed so as to have pushpins that are matable with a hole formed in the brace 19, 20 such that when assembled, the pushpins project through the hole and are held in position. This further facilitates the disassembly of the braces in that one need only to push the pin in to remove the plugs. Additionally, braces 19 and 20 could be formed of multiple connectable pieces to facilitate packaging and storage of the game table.

Figure 6 shows a construction panel and bracket used in creating the side and end panels described above, and Figure 7 shows the mounting of a side or end panel in leg 12. Construction panel 76 can be a panel that is used for first end panel 14 (including end panel sections 34 and 35), first side panel 16 (including panel sections 46 and 47), second end panels 24 or second side panels 26. Construction panels 76 may conveniently be plastic panels, wood panels, composite panels or any other suitable flat panel forming material. In Figure 6, representative construction panel 76 has a dove-tailed edge 77 that mounts a fitting 70 thereon. Fitting 70 includes a first portion 71 that is formed as a pair of parallel wings 72 that are configured to provide dove-tail channel 74 therein for purposes of receiving dove-tailed edge 77 of a construction panel 76. Fitting 70 also includes an elongated rib 75 that is cylindrical and sized for mated engagement with slideways 66 and 67, as is shown in Figure 7. Fitting 70 may be secured to construction panel 76 in any convenient manner such as with an adhesive, stapling, etc. Fitting 70 may be an integral one-piece injection molding of a suitable plastic or may be constructed of other material.

A representative end cap 23 is illustrated in Figure 8. Here, it may be seen that end cap 23 includes an L-shaped base 81 that supports a pair of posts 82 and

83 that are oriented to engage slideways 66 and 67 for tight-fitted, frictional engagement with the ends of legs 12. If desired, a level adjusting foot member 37 may be mounted in the first ends of legs 12 opposite end cap 23. Foot member 37 is illustrated in Figure 9 and includes a base 38 having a pair of posts 39 and 40 projecting therefrom. Posts 39 and 40 are sized and oriented to mate with slideways 66 and 67. Base 38 also has a threaded opening 41 that received threaded shaft 42 of disc-shaped foot piece 43. With reference to Figures 2, 17 and 18, an optional ball collector 28 is illustrated. Ball collector 28 includes hooks 29 to suspend ball collector 28 from the upper edge of first end panels 14.

The structure of the various side panels and end panels are illustrated further in Figures 10-15. As is seen in Figures 10-12, the structure of second end panels 24 and second side panels 26 are shown in greater detail. In Figures 10 and 11, it may be seen that an interior surface of construction panel 76 that forms side panel 26 supports a pair of horizontal rails 93 that are separated by a gap 94. A support block 95 is positioned below gap 94. In Figure 12, it may be seen that the interior surface of construction panel 76 that forms end panel 24 supports blocks 96. When the two side panels 26 are mounted to legs 12, a transverse beam 99 may be supported by opposed blocks 95. Floor 15 is supported by the upper edges of end panels 24 and side panels 26. Alternatively, brackets supported by side panels, end panels, or both may be used to support floor 15. To accommodate the supported margins of floor 18, panel sections 47 each have a shoulder 39 formed at a respective corner. Auxiliary floor 18 may be supported in a stored state by rails 93 and blocks 96 along with beam 99.

End panels 14 and side panels 16 are illustrated in greater detail in Figures 13-15 with end panels 14 and side panels 16 having a common height. In figure 13, first end panels 14 are formed of two end panel sections, 34 and 35. Panel section 35 has a goal opening 33 formed therein. First side panels 16 are shown in Figure 14 and 15. Here, again, side panels 16 are formed by a pair of side panel sections 46 and 47. As may be seen in these figures, the upper edge 49 of side panel section 47 is provided with a plurality of spaced-apart cutouts 50. Likewise, the lower edge 48 of side panel section 46 is provided with cutouts 52 such that, when side panel section is mounted on legs 12, cut outs 52 register with cutouts 50 to provide seats or openings for rotatably supporting a plurality of play rod assemblies 54. Locator pins 53 engage bores (not shown) to facilitate the registration of the cut-outs. Cut-

outs 51 and 55 are provided to form an opening for the introduction of a ball into the play area.

Each play rod assembly 54, as is shown in Figures 1 and 16, includes an elongated rod 56, a handle 58 and strikers 60. Bushings 57 are provided to slideably mount rods 56 in cut-outs 50, 52, and washer 59 and resilient bumpers 61 slide on rods 56 as is known in the art. Strikers 60 are rigidly mounted to rods 56 so that, rotation of rod assemblies 54 by means of handles 52 will cause rotation of strikers 60 for purposes of propelling a play ball (not shown) towards goals 62 formed in first end panels 14. Naturally, as is well known in the art, other goals could be provided for game play.

To understand the assembly of game table 10, reference may again be made to Figure 2. First, foot member 37 is mounted in the first end of leg 12. Next, lower positioning elements 25 are inserted into slideways 66 and 67 of each respective leg 12. Braces 19 and 20 are then mounted to legs 12 by sliding cylindrical bars 92 of end plugs 91 in the appropriate slideways 66 and 67. Shelf 21 may be mounted on braces 19 and 20 by hook brackets 22, if desired. A second set of positioning members 25' are then inserted into slideways 66 and 67 so that they rest on bars 92 of end plugs 91 on braces 19 and 20. Second end panels 24 and second side panels 26 may then be mounted to legs 12 by inserting ribs 75 into slideways 66 and 67. If desired, a floor 32 may be supported by second end panels 24 and second side panels 26. Thus, second end panels 24 and second side panels 26 along with floor panel 32 form a storage compartment having an interior 36 for the storage of extra or alternative construction pieces and components for the conversion of game table 10 among two or more games. Transverse beam 99 may be mounted between side panels 26, and auxiliary floor 18 may also be stored in the interior bounded by end panels 24 and side panels 26.

The game configured for play is next assembled. Here, floor 15 is supported on the upper edges of second end panels 24 and second side panels 26 to provide the playing surface for game table 10. End panels 14 and side panels 16 are then mounted to legs 12 by inserting the respective ribs 75 of panel sections 34, 35, 46 and 47 in slideways 66 and 67. Rod assemblies 54 are positioned before mounting side panel sections 46. Thereafter, end caps 23 may be inserted on each upper end of leg 12 to retain first end panels 14 and side panel sections 46 in position, and ball collectors 28 may be hung in position.

In the above description, it should be appreciated that play rod assemblies 54 can be pre-assembled thereby avoiding the needs for detailed assembly by the user. By splitting first side panels 16 into side panel sections 46 and 47, these rod assemblies can simply be dropped into position at the desired location wherein they extend transversely across the playing field defined by a floor panel 15. After play rod assemblies 54 are placed in cutouts 50, then, the mounting of side panel section 46 on the respective legs 12 captures the end portions of the rod assemblies.

With reference now to Figure 19, it should be appreciated that a second game may be configured by game table 10. In Figure 19, game table 10 has been reconfigured to simulate the table game of hockey. In this reconfiguration, the location of first end panels 14 and second end panels 24 have been reversed. Second play rod assemblies 100 which, for example, have been stored the interior 36 of a lower compartment may extend through openings 98 in construction panel 76 that forms end panels 24. Here, however, as is known in the art, rods 104 of play rod assemblies 100 extend under second floor panel 18 for manipulation of strikers 108 which are in the form of hockey players. Here again, as is known, rods 104 may be advanced longitudinally to reciprocate strikers 108; handles 110 can be rotated to rotate strikers 108 to strike a puck across the upper surface of second floor 106. Accordingly, floor 18 is provided with a plurality of longitudinally extending slots 112 to accommodate passage of the longitudinally slideably and rotatable actuation rod for strikers 108 (See Figure 26).

To assemble this second configuration, rods 104 are inserted through play rod assemblies 110 without strikers mounting thereon have their inner ends inserted through slots 112 after which strikers 108 are mounted. After end panels 24 are placed in position, floor 18 and the assembled play rod assemblies 110 are mounted and supported thereon with rods 104 positioned in respective portion of cutouts 98.

Turning now to Figure 20, a diagrammatic view of game table 10' is shown which may be either of the configurations described above without the play rod assemblies. The purpose of Figure 20 is to illustrate that other games which may be mounted on the upper edge 11' of game table 10'. For example, as is illustrated in Figure 20, a miniature table tennis table 120 includes a tabletop 122 and a net assembly 124 that may be releaseably secured thereon. Table tennis assembly may be positioned on upper edge 11' and held in position relative to any suitable manner as would be apparent to the ordinarily skilled artisan in this field of invention.

Alternatively, a miniature billiards table 130 may be positioned and suitable retained along upper edge 11'. Here, miniature billiards table 130 includes a frame 132 provided with a perimeter of cushions 134 extending around a felt surface top 136 between pockets 138. Again, billiards table 130 is supported relative to game table 10' in any suitable manner within the skill those in this art. The game assembly may be selected from a group consisting of table tennis, billiards, basketball, roulette, baseball, football, softball, darts, bowling, chess, checkers, table tennis, craps, poker, Black Jack and other card games, bingo, hockey, soccer, dice games, video games.

With reference now to Figures 21-24, a second exemplary embodiment of a suitable leg 212 is shown along with a second embodiment of a construction panel 276. In Figure 21, a portion of a leg 212 is shown for illustrative purposes. Here, it may be seen that leg 212 includes a pair of hollow, cylindrical tubular members 264 which are joined by a web 266 so that tubular members 264 are rigidly secured to one another. While tubular members 264 are shown to be cylindrical in cross section, having open interiors 268, it should be understood that leg members 212 can take other configurations as would be known in the art. In this embodiment, leg members 212 are formed as a continuous extrusion of any suitable plastic material such as polyvinylchloride that is of sufficient rigidity and strength to support the gaming apparatus.

Figure 23 shows a construction panel and bracket used in creating the side and end panels described above. Thus, for representative purposes, it may be seen in Figure 23 that a bracket 270 includes a pair of parallel wings 272 that define a channel 274 therein for purposes of receiving an end edge portion of a construction panel 276. Construction panel 276 can be a panel that is used for first and second end panels 214 and 224 and first and second side panels 216 and 226. In any event, bracket 270 includes a C-shaped portion 278 that is sized to slideably engage either of tubular members 264 as is best shown in Figure 24 so that the construction panels of 276 may be slidably supported on legs 212. Also, as is shown in Figure 24, it may be seen that the end portion of construction panels 276 are retained between wings 272 and fastened therein by any suitable fasteners such as staples 280. Here, brackets 270 may be an integral one-piece injection molding of a suitable plastic, or they may be constructed of other materials. Construction panels 276 may

conveniently be plastic panel, wood panels, composite panels or any other suitable flat panel forming material.

Turning to Figure 22, a representative positioning bracket 220 is illustrated. Here, positioning bracket 220 includes a pair of sleeve members 292 that are joined by web walls 294 having openings 296 formed therein. Sleeve members 292 have an interior 298 sized to be slidably received on tubular members 264. Once in position, a bolt 228 can be inserted through openings 296 which register with a corresponding opening in web 266 (not shown) at the desired location. Tightening nut 230 thereon forces web walls 294 towards one another to reduce the dimension of interiors 298 and thereby frictional grip tubular members 264. Positioning brackets 220 may conveniently be constructed as injection molded pieces of plastic, although other materials can easily be used to fabricate these positioning brackets.

Turning to Figure 25, it should also be appreciated that the concepts introduced above could be used an inexpensive and easy to assemble game, such as a hockey game 300. In Figure 25, it may be seen that a base frame 320 includes a pair of end panels 314 and a pair of side panels 316 that are formed of an integral one piece construction, for example, out of suitable plastic material. The upper edges 315 are provided with cutouts 350 to accommodate rods 304 of play rod assemblies 301. An upper frame piece 330 has a pair of end pieces 324 and a pair of sides 326 that again may be integrally formed of a suitable plastic material the lower edges 325 of end walls 324 are provided with cut outs 352 that will register with cut outs 350 so as to provide rod seats for rods 304.

In assembly, upright actuator rods 340 of a representative play rod assembly 301 is inserted through a respective slot formed in hockey floor 306 after which striker 308 is mounted thereon. However, as is illustrated in Figure 25, the upright actuator rod and the gear assembly 342 is now illustrated. It should be understood that this mechanism is well known in the art table hockey games. In any event, after mounting strikers such as striker 308 on an upright rod 340, floor 308 can be positioned in frame 330 with rods 304 positioned in the mating cut-outs 350, 352. Frame pieces 320 and 330 may be secured together in any suitable, desired manner.

While the above construction of game tables has been described with respect to foosball and table hockey, it should be understood that a wide variety of games are contemplated by the present invention. The present invention has particular

applicability where such games require the mounting of play rod assemblies between either the sides or ends of the game table. Providing a separation line between panel sections that form the seats for the rotatable rods, assembly and disassembly can be easily accomplished without requiring the complete break down and re-assembly of the play rod assemblies.

Moreover, as noted above, the game table may also support play surfaces such as table tennis, billiards and the like, and it should be understood that the present invention is not to be limited to just the particular games described. Further, it should be appreciated, that, where the game table provides the ability to convert among several games, the unused game structures, if properly dimensioned, may be stored for example in the interior of the lower storage compartment.

The present invention is also directed to method of configuring a game table. This method may include any of the steps inherent in the above-described structure and assembly of the game tables. Broadly, the method includes the step of interconnected a plurality of side panels in an assembled state to surround the play area wherein each side panel has a top edge, a bottom edge and opposite end edges. Here, at least some of the side panels are formed by pairs of cooperative panel sections having confronting edges with cut outs that register with one another to define openings. The method then includes the step of supporting a floor panel across the play area to define a game floor and positioning a plurality of pre-assembled play rod assemblies in respective ones of the openings.

The method according to the invention may also include a first set of opposed side panels and a second set of opposed side panels. Here, the first and second sets of side panels are adapted to configure two different games. The step of interconnecting a plurality side panels then includes the step of selecting one of the first and second sets of opposed side panels to be assembled and a step of storing the other one of said first and second sets of opposed side panels. In the method, the preassembled play rod assemblies may be selected from a group consisting of table hockey rod assemblies and table soccer rod assemblies.

Finally, with reference to Figure 26, it may appreciated that some of the components of the present invention may also be used to construct assemblies other than game tables. In Figure 26, for example, a shelf assembly 410 is illustrated and includes a plurality of upright legs 412 having the construction described with respect to Figure 3. A plurality of braces 419 and 420 extend between pairs of adjacent legs

412 with braces 419 and 420 being constructed the same as braces 19 and 20 described above. Adjacent ones of braces 419 and adjacent ones of braces 420 are positioned at selected locations by means of positioning elements 25 of the type described with respect to Figure 4. Shelves 421 may then be supported on braces 419 and 420 by means of hook shaped brackets 422, again as described with respect to shelf 21.

Accordingly, the present invention has been described with some degree of particularity directed to the exemplary embodiments of the present invention. It should be appreciated, though, that the present invention is defined by the following claims construed in light of the prior art so that modifications or changes may be made to the exemplary embodiments of the present invention without departing from the inventive concepts contained herein.

Accordingly, the present invention has been described with some degree of particularity directed to the exemplary embodiments of the present invention. It should be appreciated, though, that the present invention is defined by the following claims construed in light of the prior art so that modifications or changes may be made to the exemplary embodiments of the present invention without departing from the inventive concepts contained herein.